

INTERNET RESEARCH

HOW TO MAKE THE INTERNET WORK FOR YOU!

THE INTERNET PROVIDES US WITH:

- Gossip
- Sports Scores
- TV Shows
- Email/Communication
- News
- Any information gathering activities we want

WHY?

- Valuable research tool
- Convenient
- Plentiful information

AND YET...

...we need to use simple yet powerful tools to help us determine if a website is suited for academic research.

BECAUSE OF THE INTERNET...

...we have the most amount of information ever available to us in human history.

DANGER!

Some web site information is not necessarily correct or reliable.

When using the Internet as a research tool, we must distinguish between quality information and inaccurate or incomplete information.

ACCEPTABLE TYPES OF WEBSITES:

- **.gov**
 - United States government agency, including state and local governments (www.whitehouse.gov)
- **.net**
 - ISP (Internet Service Provider) or miscellaneous sites (used sometimes when desired name is not available in .com)
- **.com**
 - Used for virtually any commercial or non-commercial website
 - ~ or % -- Personal site (http://www.members.tripod.com/~DAdams/qkbrdinf.html)
- **.edu**
 - Educational Institutions – (www.wisc.edu)
 - Other educational sites may appear with different domain names (www.whitehouse.gov/kids)
- **.mil**
 - United States Military or Department of Defense (www.navy.mil/)
- **.org**
 - Nonprofits; personal sites; open-source projects; sometimes used by commercial entities (http://www.rtda.org)

PURPOSE

- What is the purpose of the site or page?
- Look for tips in graphics and text. Web pages may be...
 - Commercial
 - Informative
 - Educational
 - Entertaining
 - Persuasive
 - Personal
 - Institutional
 - A hoax

QUESTIONS

... TO HELP YOU EVALUATE A WEBSITE.

ACCURACY (OBLIGATION TO BE RELIABLE)

- Are the authors up-front about their purpose and content?
- Is there a way to contact the authors?
- Do the authors give credit for information used?
- Is there a reference list?

AUTHORITY (I.E. TRUSTWORTHY, RELIABLE, ETC.)

- Who is the author?
 - What are his/her credentials?
 - Does s/he have sufficient authority to speak on the subject?
- Is there any way to reach him/her?
 - Is there an organizational or corporate sponsor?
- Is this page authentic, or is it a hoax?
- Is more than one source used for background information within the site?
 - If so, does the site contain a bibliography?
 - Where does the site originate?
 - (If it is a university, a well-known organization or agency, or a respected publication then the information is likely to be trustworthy.)
- Does the site explore the topic in-depth?

OBJECTIVITY (NONBIASED)

- Does the content reflect a bias?
 - Is the bias explicit or hidden?
 - Does the identity of the author or sponsor suggest a bias?
- How does the bias impact the usefulness of the information?
- Are the links to other parts of the site appropriate?
- Do the links take you to information that helps you learn more about the subject?
- Does the site contain links to other useful and up-to-date resources?
 - Although many legitimate sites have products to sell, some sites are more interested in sales than in providing accurate information.

CURRENCY

- Is the information on the page up-to-date?
 - Can you tell when the page was last updated?
 - Are there dead links?
- Is there a difference between the date the information was created and the date the page was last updated?

CLARITY

- Is the information clearly presented?
 - Is the text neat, legible and formatted for easy reading?
 - If there are graphics, do they add to the content or distract?
- If there are advertisements, do they interfere with your ability to use the page?
- Are the pages well organized?
- Are there mistakes in spelling or word usage?

ACCESSIBILITY

- Can you get in?
- Does the site load quickly?
- Can you move around the site easily?
- Is the site or page still there next time?
- Is there a text-only alternative for the visually-impaired?